

"This is the first
smokejumper
fatality in Alaska
since the 1970's."

Andy Williams,
AFS Public Affairs

ALASKA People

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March/April 2000

National Team Investigates Smokejumper Fatality

by Andy Williams

On May 1, a national investigation team was in Fairbanks to investigate the parachuting accident that killed Alaska Smokejumper **David J. Liston** on Saturday, April 29. The team should have a report done by mid-June.

Liston, 28, died when his primary parachute failed to open. In preparation for the fire season, he and 21 other smokejumpers were making practice jumps near the Alaska Fire Service facilities on Ft. Wainwright. After his fall, smokejumpers trained as emergency medical technicians treated him. He was then transported by ambulance to the Bassett Army Hospital where he was pronounced dead at 5:30 p.m.

Liston was the third jumper of the last four-person group to jump. The fourth and last jumper also had a primary chute malfunction, but was able to successfully deploy his reserve chute and land safely. None of the other jumpers experienced parachute problems.

"Everyone at the Alaska Fire Service is saddened by Dave's death," says AFS Manager **Scott Billing**. "We're going to try and find out what happened to make sure something like this doesn't happen

In Memoriam



David Liston
1972-2000

Fellow smokejumpers will remember **David Liston** as a free spirit, for his positive attitude, and always doing more than what was expected. Ever since he became a firefighter his goal was to become a smokejumper.

Liston was born April 17, 1972 in Portland, Ore. He graduated from Gladstone High School in 1991 and attended Clackamas Community College in Oregon in 1991 and 1992. He began firefighting in the Sisters Ranger District of the Deschutes National Forest in 1993.

again."

Tim Murphy, BLM Field Office Manager in Miles City, Montana and leader of the investigation

team said the group is focusing on why there was a malfunction with the two primary chutes and one reserve chute. Two BLM experts in the packing and deployment of parachutes are part of the investigation team and an independent expert in rigging and canopy deployment is a consultant.

There have only been three previous smokejumper fatalities nationwide involving the use of a parachute. In 1960, a jumper in Redding, California died during a jump when a static line wrapped around his neck as he exited the plane. In 1966 an Alaskan jumper died after his chute became entangled in trees, and in 1991, a smokejumper in Missoula, Montana died when his main chute did not deploy during a training jump.

Liston, originally from Oregon, first came to work with the Alaska Fire Service in 1995. He worked with the Midnight Sun Hot Shot Crew in 1995 and 1996, and was squad boss with the North Star Fire Crew in 1997. He rookieed with the Alaska Smokejumpers in 1998. He and his wife Kristin, who also works with the Alaska Fire Service, lived in the Girdwood area during the winter. *Williams is a writer/editor with the Alaska Fire Service.*

Midnight Sun Runners To Get Race Profile

Runners of the Mayor's Midnight Sun Marathon Race in June will have a scale map of the race route due to the efforts of the BLM, the municipality of Anchorage and the University of Alaska. A request by UAA students for the loan of GPS equipment to map the race route

had GPS coordinator **Dayle Sherba** decide that instead of loaning the equipment it would be best that BLM get involved. **Sherba** and **Jake Schlapper** from the Anchorage Field Office worked with UAA students and parks and recreation staff for a day collecting

data. Traveling by snowmobile they mapped 40 miles of race routes in less than five hours, starting at Ft. Richardson and traveling to Point Woronzoff.

A race profile has been requested for years from runners from all around the country.

COLA UPDATE

Are we going to lose our Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) as of December 2000?

"No," says Conveyances branch chief **Sharon Warren**.

"Almost everyday I get calls from employees asking me that!" says **Warren**, who is also the president of the COLA Defense Committee of Anchorage, a group of nine federal employees who have represented the interests of federal employees in COLA allowance areas for the past 15 years. This committee was established as a result of the successful *Alaniz* litigation in the early 1980's. OPM had reduced COLA in Anchorage and was sued by federal and postal employees. OPM subsequently reinstated the full 25% COLA rate and compensated employees for the period of reduction, costing the government millions of dollars.

So what's happening with COLA? Presently, lawyers with the Office of Personnel Management, Department of Justice and lawyers representing the federal and postal employees in COLA areas are



negotiating a settlement on disputed COLA issues. There are four lawsuits filed in all COLA areas except Alaska. Allowance areas include Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands. A 1996

memorandum of understanding set the process, dubbed Safe Harbor, in motion. The Safe Harbor process directed all parties to address COLA issues such as cost comparisons between COLA areas and Washington D.C. for things such as housing, public transportation and education. Also accounted for is the differences in living standards and amenities between the areas and Washington. The litigation on COLA methodology has been put on hold until all parties can resolve these issues.

The lawyers and parties are close to a settlement which **Warren** expects to happen later this month or in early June.

Indications are that there will be substantial changes to the existing methodology.

As in the past, the COLA committee will hold public meetings which the Safe Harbor process, issues, research and any settlement will be discussed.

In the meantime, the following is a schedule of things to come:

- Any settlement must be finalized. The settlement agreement and summary notice would be filed with the court and made available to Federal and Postal employees.
- Public meetings will be held in the COLA areas explaining the entire process.
- The court will either approve or disapprove the settlement.
- Proposed regulations published in the Federal Register with a 60 day comment period.
- Final regulations are published in the Federal Register.
- Office of Personnel Management conducts surveys using new methodology.

Any changes to the COLA program would require a lengthy notice and comment process says **Warren**. In summary, changes to COLA could take several years and the current 25% COLA rate for Alaska is expected to continue to possibly 2003. As to the continuing COLA saga, stay tuned for the next COLA update.

For questions call **Warren** at 907-271-5699.

Do clothes matter?



by Scott Guyer

Are pressed shirts and ties in the workplace on a comeback? So hopes Vince Rua, owner of an east coast chain of menswear stores and key organizer of the "Dress-Up Thursday" task force (Anchorage Daily News, 2-23-2000). Rua contends that dressing down has meant lower production, less professionalism and lower morale. He's presently working with a mid-western university studying the subject.

What would Mr. Rua find walking around BLM-Alaska? I'm sure that business sweats and the ultra casual clothes would not be impressive.

Historically, BLM's involvement in grazing, mining and conservation produced a culture with a more relaxed atmosphere and dress code. But an office, corporation or institution can establish its own culture as well. How we look, act and conduct business makes up our corporate identity; that's not only how we see ourselves as an organization, but also how our customers and public see us. Attitudes that are accepted, practiced and allowed shape the corporate culture of the Alaska State Office.

How do you think a dress up day would work at the Alaska State Office? Would it go over like a lead balloon? Are you one of those people who come to work in sweats, worn tennis shoes, blue jeans with holes, t-shirts or stained clothing? If so, you represent the BLM to the public and no wonder they don't have the best opinion of us. If you dress down, don't complain when you're not treated professionally. If you don't look

professional then your appearance shows a lack of concern about how you do your job.

Should neon hair, facial piercings and tatoos be acceptable in our work place? Apparently some BLM-Alaska managers think so. Is this the image you want to work in, the culture you want to promote?

Employees are not totally to blame for this. Managers determine how professional their organizations will be. Unfortunately many have set low standards. A good leader/manager guides and challenges employees to achieve, and to respect and treat co-workers and the public in a professional manner.

Dressing in a more professional manner can go a long way towards improving the workplace. While "Dress-Up Thursday" may not be the answer, we all can make our workplace, and our culture something to be proud of. It's up to us to make it happen. *Guyer is a general biologist with the Division of Cadastral Survey.*

COUNTERPOINT: COLA vs. Locality Pay

This is in response to January/February COLA article.

Your COLA article was informative. As a member of the Safe Harbor Working Group, I have been working with other COLA area representatives, OPM, and DOJ, on COLA issues. It has been a three year collaborative process where I have distributed information about the status of the process.

COLA has nothing to do with locality pay. Our COLA is computed based on the differences between Washington D.C. and the COLA area. When Congress was instituting locality pay years ago, a number of us asked about it. Due to the uncertainties about the rates and how the locality program would be administered, we chose not to be included.

Congress is not looking at

reducing COLA. All COLA area members are aware of the compensation issue of locality pay and COLA, and we will continue to work on this issue. Further, Congress mandated a study of locality pay in the COLA areas conducted by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics in 1997. The data favored employees in Alaska to the tune of approximately 50 percent. However, it takes Congressional action to institute locality pay and it is unlikely that Congress would consider an amount as great as 50%. Further there is a mix of employee support depending on how close employees are to retirement. I am confident that the Safe Harbor process will resolve most issues and improve the existing COLA program. *Warren is a Conveyances branch chief.*

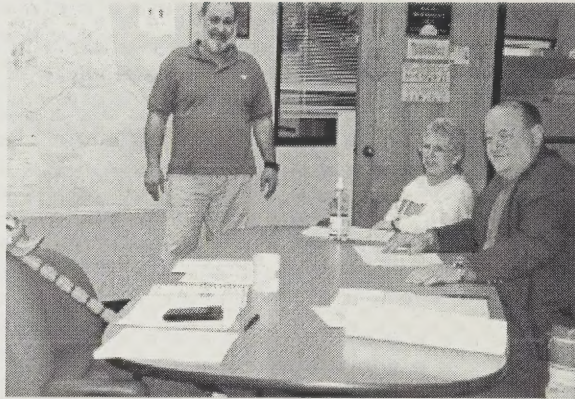
Cool

Tunes for Director. BLM Director **Tom Fry** was treated to the sounds of Midstream during his recent visit at the Campbell Creek Science Center. **Jake Schlapfer**, AFO outdoor recreation planner and band member says Midstream plays Celtic, Irish, bluegrass, country and some original tunes. **Schlapfer** and Tom Bryan are the guitarists while Heather Adrian is their violinist. They have performed at folk festivals throughout Alaska. **Schlapfer** says a band favorite is the Kodiak Beer Music Festival because they pay for everything! You can usually find them playing somewhere in Anchorage at places such as Humpies, Vagabond Blues and various coffee shops.

Denton is BLM's Nominee. Congratulations to **Jeff Denton**, Anchorage Field Office subsistence specialist for being BLM's Employee of the Year nominee. Denton's was nominated for the exceptional work he does in the ever challenging subsistence program. The Employee of Year luncheon was held May 4 in Anchorage.

Former Employee Working on Iditarod Series. Former Anchorage Field Office employee **Dean Littlepage** has been contracted to do research and write text for a series of interpretative panels of the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

Archaeologist Gets Invitation to Australian Dig. As a result of Australians visiting the BLM's dinosaur display at the Sportsman show, archaeologist **Bob King** was invited by the director of Excavation with the University of Melbourne at Monash to participate in an archaeology dig on the southeast coast of Australia just south of Melbourne. The excavation is being partially funded by the National Geographic Society and if things go well, King would be digging in Feb. 2001.



Skeleton Head Sits in for Oviatt? Deputy State Director George Oviatt gets a good natured ribbing by his fellow meeting mates who replaced him with a skeleton walking stick when he was away from the meeting. (l-r) Oviatt, Brenda Zenan, Fran Cherry.



Lunch time isn't just for eating, a horsedrawn ride in downtown Anchorage at noon can make for the most enjoyable break. Riders—Beth Twohy, Rhonda Reynolds, Nora Benson, Dot Tideman, Dominica VanKoten, Kathy Flippen, Lois Simenson, Susan DiPrete, Linda Birtles.

HRDC to Hold First Meeting. The newly formed Human Resource Development Committee will hold its first meeting at the end of May. The HRDC is a forum for employee issues and concerns and will evaluate and recommend ways to improve communication and job satisfaction. Your employee representatives are:

Larry Crane, State Director's staff
Rhonda Reynolds, Cadastral
John Montgomery, Support Svcs

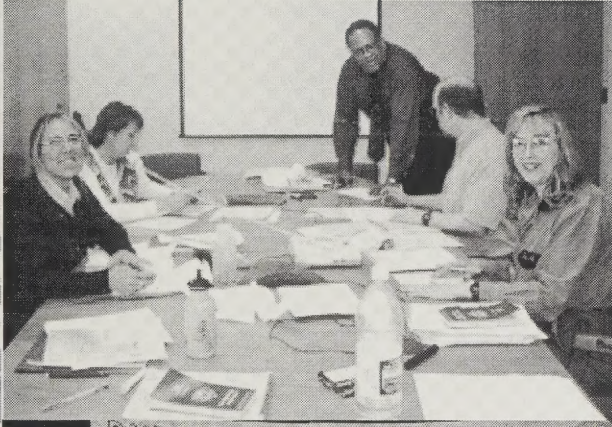
Mark Meyer, Lands, Minerals, and Resources

Margaret McDaniel, Conveyances
Wanda Tinker, Joint Pipeline Office
Randy Goodwin, Northern Field Off.
Mike Alcorn, Anchorage Field Off.
Brenda Becker, Glennallen Field Off.
Tom McGuire, Alaska Fire Service
Bob Schneider will serve as the ALT representative; **Roy Walker** from EEO and **Sandy Larson** from HR will be advisors and ASD **Linda Rundell** will be the committee's sponsor.

News



Top left-Teresa McPherson shares a light hearted moment with Jennifer Lind (seated) during a fire simulation training session. Top right - (Standing) John Montgomery and Marcia Cowen (front right) join other agency employees being trained as information officers during a fire simulation exercise. (right) Bob King is joined by Carl Ramm, the artist who drew the dinosaurs for BLM's display at the Sportsman show.



On April 22, Human Resources Sandie Wallace, Tammy Piner, Hazel Pitts, Beth Deane and Sandy Larson participated in this year's Multiple Sclerosis Walk and Spring Four Miler. The walk began at the Regal Alaskan Hotel and went around Lake Hood. They walked in behalf of former co-worker Helen Oradei and raised more than \$500.

Awards

April 13
All Employees Meeting

Carol Belenski, Resources illustrator, *On the Spot award* for bat presentation.

John Payne, Resources wildlife biologist, *On the Spot award* for development of national Challenge Cost Share agreement between BLM and Ducks Unlimited.

Curt Wilson, Resources NEPA coordinator/planner, *Star award* for assuming subsistence coordinator's duties.

Marilyn Austin - Conveyances land law examiner, *On the Spot award* for completing extra title recovery workload cases.

Greg Chavez and **Paul Russell**, Support Svcs bindery machine operators, *On the Spot awards* for printing support for several conveyance training sessions.

Allyson Johnson, Conveyances land law examiner, *On the Spot award* for developing an use and occupancy analysis form.

Bonny Willer, Conveyances computer specialist, *On the Spot award* for assistance to the Conveyances Quality Control/Quality Assurance Team.

Lee Koss, Resources hydrologist, *Star award* for the collection and coordination of data for abandoned mines land/clean water action plan website.

Linda McClelland, Support Services computer specialist, *Star award* for the construction of Abandoned Mines Land/Clean Water action plan website.

Jennifer Lind, Conveyances office automation assistant, *On the Spot award* for administrative support for the Resource Advisory Council meeting.

Ron Alston	Bucky Blankinship
Mel D'Anza	Ed Donnelly
Bill Hopster	Mike Nolen
Nathan Rathbun	Jerry Risch
Steve Sandy	Bill Schorr
Sandee Smith	Carl Thorpe
Keith Westfall	Steven Woodward

Team award, Support Services warehouse workers for accomplishing projects which include new bar code inventory program and new \$25,000 reimbursable agreement.

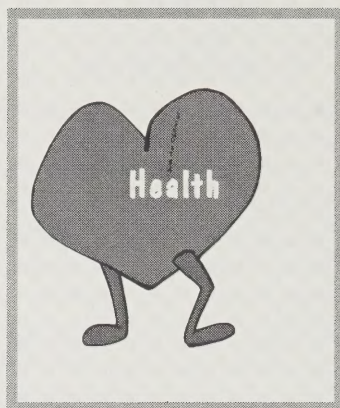
Scott Guyer, Cadastral Survey general biologist, *On the Spot award* for contributions to Pathways presentation.

Bob Fisk, Resources mining/petroleum engineer, *On the Spot* for contributions made to Pathways presentation.

Jake Schlaffer, Anchorage Field Office outdoor rec. planner, *On the Spot award* for work done at Director's evening session at the Campbell Science Center.

Nancy Stimson, *On the Spot* for planning and support of Director's visit to Campbell Creek Science Center.

Teresa McPherson - *On the Spot award* for public affairs work done for Director's visit.



Your Training Heart Rate

Make your cardiovascular training work for you by knowing your target heart rate. How do you figure that? Remember this formula when doing continuous aerobic workout:

Subtract your age from 220 and the difference is your maximum heart rate.

$220 - \text{Age} = \text{Maximum Heart Rate (MHR)}$

$\text{MHR} \times .65 = \text{BPM (low end of training zone)}$

$\text{MHR} \times .85 = \text{BPM (high end of training zone)}$

Recent studies find that if weight loss is your goal it is better to work longer at the lower end of your training zone (60 percent to 70 percent). Train at the higher end (75 percent to 85 percent) if stamina and endurance are desired.

Determine your pulse rate by finding your pulse and counting the number of heart beats in 15 seconds, then multiply by four.

BPM = Beats Per Minute

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